

There has been much discussion about the Kentucky Horse Park and we on the Kentucky Hunter Jumper Board are diligently watching the goings on and are prepared to address any issues that arise. Nina Bonnie, a founder of the Kentucky Hunter Jumper Association, would like respond to an article that appeared on the *Chronicle of the Horse* website on March 8.

You can read the article here. <http://www.chronofhorse.com/article/kentucky-horse-park-looks-toward-improving-financial-mismanagement>

Nina Bonnie's Response:

COMMENTS ON THE ONLINE ARTICLE RE: THE KENTUCKY HORSE PARK, by Nina Bonnie

I was appointed by then-Governor Martha Layne Collins to be the first head of the newly created commission responsible for the Kentucky Horse Park (KHP). I offer a broader view than one presented in the article by Natalie Voss published in the magazine and online by the *Chronicle of the Horse*.

As the Legislature was not anxious to spend money on the KHP (Governor Collin's predecessor labeled the Park a "White Elephant"), the commission, with the Governor's blessing, set up a foundation to form a public-private partnership that could develop a first-rate show facility. Since then, thanks to many contributors, the foundation has raised over \$30 million worth of support and has built facilities including rings, barns and tourist attractions, and has run events that raise crucially needed money for the Park.

My view:

The Park has not overbuilt. To host the World Equestrian Games in 2010 and to accommodate present and future international events, the Park needs all the stabling and rings, as well as the stadium and arena capacity that it now has. The Alltech Arena hosts The National Horse Show, which for over 100 years was in New York City at Madison Square Garden. The Voss article does not take into account that there are now over 30 equine trade organizations and headquarters based at the Park, all of which bring tax dollars to the city and state. It does not mention the fact that, as one of the outstanding facilities in the world, KHP's presence has led to the purchase of neighboring farms by owners and trainers who exhibit at the Park--another source of state revenues.

Nor does the article mention revenues brought with them by tourists and show exhibitors. These hotel, motel, restaurant revenues have a huge economic impact on the economy of Kentucky.

I am willing to bet that the revenue produced by the competitors and visitors coming to the Park plus revenues from recent real estate sales around the Park make up at least double of any tax payer dollars put into the KHP.

The Park has become the extraordinary asset it is today through the dedication and help of many people, including the show managers mentioned in the article. Those summer shows have donated a hunter ring, major ring maintenance and the top-quality footing necessary for today's top hunter/jumper disciplines and has been largely responsible for the exhibitors and vendors who spend more than a few weeks each year at the Park.

Presently, the Park hosts several championship events: The Rolex\*\*\*\* that begins in late April is the only four-star, three-day event held in North America and attracts Olympiads from several countries. The Pyramid Society (Egyptian Arabian) show is that discipline's highlight! The National Horse Show is the climax for the hunter and jumper disciplines. The International Hunter Derby and the Pre-green Incentive have their finals in the Park as does USEF Pony Finals.

Based on the results of the recent audits that focus on complicated and difficult-to-manuever state agency rules, a different organizational structure might be a better way forward for the Park if it is to remain a premier and competitive show facility, as well as the wonderful tourist attraction it presently is! Our state legislature is slow to provide the support needed for repair, chiefly because there are so many demands on the state budget and so few dollars to meet them. However the larger truth is that over the last 30 years, through five administrations, the public-private model has worked very well.

With an increasing eye to strict interpretation of the statutes, the Park is limited in how it can function to compete with other major show facilities. Often the Park supporters feel like Sisyphus pushing the rock up the hill! Long-term loyalties have brought the Park to where it is today, but now is a good time to review not just how far we have come, but where we are heading! A greater presence for the Western disciplines, and perhaps down the road, a festival celebrating all horses, would be appropriate. What's not appropriate is cherry-picking audit results to create a case that obscures the great success achieved over time through public and private efforts. There is much to build upon at the Kentucky Horse Park. There is no need to tear down what has worked!

Nina Bonnie

Robbie Murphy, a former board member of KHJA and a staunch supporter of the hunter/jumper industry in Kentucky would also like to address the article. Here are his thoughts:

Hello everyone,

I wanted to address the story in the newspaper concerning the KHP audit and explain the "flat rate" contract. It was put into place 10 years ago and was renegotiated several times with whatever Horse Park administration was there to account for the fact that our shows used the entire facility over several consecutive weeks and to offset the extra costs that our shows incurred each year to be able to operate the largest shows at the Kentucky Horse Park. These costs were for labor and equipment for routine maintenance items, as well as for arena repair and construction. In 2009 and 2010, our company spent almost \$400,000 to install Ottosport footing in the hunter complex. These improvements were completed in time for the 2010 World Equestrian Games. In all, our contributions over the years approach \$1 million dollars. In addition to the flat rate, we are charged for any additional items such as temporary stabling and vendor spaces. These charges amount to as much as 35 percent additional cost per show.

My father, Robert Murphy, started the first hunter jumper show at the Park, which still operates every July, and my mother, Mary Rena Murphy, started the "A" shows over 30 years ago. We continue to support the Park. I love the Park! My kids were raised there. New Park administrators Jonathan Lang and

Laura Prewitt have been great to work with this past season and we look forward to working with them in the future. And I look forward to seeing all of you at the shows this coming season.

Rob Murphy